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438 mala the people travel miles to exchange their produce; and
443 so important is the market as a social function that a merchant will not dispose of his produce except at that place, even though offered payment far in excess of its market value.*

437 Barter was the only means of exchange, and value was
436 established by desirability and rarity. Money, an exchange medium of fixed value, did not exist. However, something had to be found which would balance an inequality of exchange by being not too valuable to use in adjusting small transactions and at the same time universally wanted. The cacao bean answered this requirement and was easily portable as well. The Aztecs were extremely fond of chocolate (the word itself is of Aztec derivation), so that beans were gladly converted into the national luxury drink. Quills of gold dust sometimes were used as an exchange medium, as were crescent-shaped knives of thin-beaten copper. These last had not the common acceptance or the utility of cacao beans, although they represented easily portable value.*

317 The most precious substance among the Aztecs was jade,
435 or stones resembling it in texture and color. Both jadeite and nephrite occur in the New World, and the American variety is distinguishable from the Asiatic stone. Uncut stones are seldom seen today, for there is no lapidaries' market in modern Middle America or the United States, whereas jade is still extensively worked in China, so that men find it worth their while to search rivers in Burma for boulders of this rare substance. (See Plate 3.)

435 The testimony of the Conquistador Bernal Diaz is conclusive on this point of value. During the night when Cortes retreated from Mexico the leader, after taking off his share of treasure, turned the surplus over to his troops. Many,

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435 burdened down with gold, drowned ignominiously in the canals. Diaz, however, noted Indian usage and confined himself to four jades which he was able to exchange later and which, in his words, "served me well in healing my wounds and gathering me food."[10]

648 181 The Aztecs did not have our modern esteem for gold, so the Spaniards had great difficulty in getting it at first. The Mexican Indians responded to the invaders' demands for objects of value by offering jade and turquoise, those substances most precious to themselves. Such misguided compliance was highly irritating to Cortes and his men, who had no ethnological training; nor, it is only fair to say, would they have wanted such education, were it available. Gold [325] was valuable to the Aztecs only for the ornaments which could be made from it, and silver may have had an even greater value, since nodules were rare and the Indians had no technique for smelting the ore.[11] (See Plates 46–47.)

262 24 Thus the Aztecs did not hold our ideas of value and wealth. Yet they contributed much to our prosperity and [567 well-being, partly through being forced as slaves to work 466] the gold and silver mines, whose modern economic significance they so little understood, and even more through the enrichment of the world's supply of foods. In addition to corn of several varieties, the Aztecs developed many sorts of beans, a very nutritive addition to human diet because of the high protein content. Squash, gourds, *chia*, *camotes*, green and red peppers, alligator pears and tomatoes were products of the versatile Middle American farmer, enriching the Aztec diet and that of the modern world. Trade with [137 southern Vera Cruz brought chocolate, vanilla and pine137] apples to the Aztec larder.[12]